

SAN ANTONIO Class Landing Assault Ship

Discussion

The operational flexibility and capability of the amphibious fleet will be significantly enhanced with the FY04 delivery of LPD-17, USS SAN ANTONIO, the first of twelve new landing assault ships to be procured by FY06. As a class, these ships will overcome amphibious lift shortfalls caused by the decommissioning of aging LPDs, LSTs, LHAs, and LSD-36s and will help the US Navy to achieve its fiscally constrained amphibious lift requirement of two and one half Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) Assault Echelon (AE). These versatile ships will have a 40 year life expectancy and complement the LHD/LHA large deck amphibious transports providing simultaneous wet-well and flight deck capabilities. Additionally, the LPD-17 class will eliminate our reliance on the Amphibious Lift Enhancement Plan (ALEP), a temporary program meant to fill the current shortfall in amphibious lift.

Each of the 25,000 ton ships will carry approximately 700 Marines, have a vehicle stowage capacity of 25,000 square feet, a well deck sized for two LCACs, and a flight deck capable of simultaneous operation of two CH-53E Super Stallions or two MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, or four CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters. The LPD-17 class will be outfitted with the Rolling Airframe Missile system for self-defense and will incorporate design features presenting a significantly reduced radar cross section, compared to previous amphibious ships.

Marine Corps Position

Maintaining projected delivery schedules and attaining operational readiness of this 12 ship class is vital to achieving the fiscally constrained goal of two and one half MEB AE equivalents of amphibious lift. Ensuring that the ship maintains a robust C4I and self-defense capability as threat systems evolve is crucial to survivability in the littoral environment.

